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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000137

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [AU](#) [SU](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: AF PDAS RANNEBERGER'S MEETING WITH AU CHAIRPERSON
CONARE ON MARGINS OF AU SUMMIT

Classified By: Political Counselor James Maxstadt for Reasons 1.4 (B and D).

1. (C) Summary. At his 29 January meeting in Abuja with African Union (AU) Chairperson Konare, Ambassador Ranneberger underscored the priority the U.S. attaches to strengthening its relationship with the AU. He emphasized U.S. support for the AU mission in Darfur. He stressed the need to use the momentum and new dynamics generated by Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to resolve Darfur quickly. He and Konare agreed on the importance of close coordination in preparing for the next round of talks in Abuja. He stressed the AU must do more publicly to condemn atrocities in Darfur.

Konare said that the AU plans to review its mandate in mid-February, including focusing on the issue of expanded support for civilian protection. As regards a tribunal to try perpetrators of atrocities in Darfur, he pressed Konare to support an alternative to the ICC (i.e. a UN/AU hybrid). Konare agreed to consider the idea. (Ranneberger raised this issue in other meetings as well; see septels). Ranneberger urged caution with respect to deployment of any force to Somalia; Konare, however, indicated that the AU is moving ahead with plans to deploy a force of up to several thousand.

Konare said that the AU will name a commission to study the issue of UNSC reform, that will lead to development of an AU position by the end of February in time to influence the UNSYG's report in March.

2. (C) Konare said premature re-hatting in Darfur would be "a disaster" for the AU; however, the AU will cooperate "at all levels" with the UN force deployed in southern Sudan. UN Special Representative Pronk, he continued, was bringing a draft UN-AU MOU to Abuja outlining the scope of cooperation. He said that a new government in Khartoum -- and Garang's active engagement -- are key to a solution in Darfur. He stressed that that AU troops should be "troops of protection." Konare said that the AU will hold a donors conference in February in Addis, and welcomed the possibility of further U.S. support for AU capacity and institution building. Concluding, he said the July AU Summit may occur in Sirte, Libya, but he expects the current summit to extend President Obasanjo's tenure until the January 2006 summit. End Summary.

Darfur and the AU Mission

3. (C) Ambassador Ranneberger expressed appreciation for the vital role the AU is playing in Darfur. It is important to the AU's future that it achieve a credible measure of success in Darfur. UN plans for immediate cooperation with the AU mission will pave the way for eventual re-hatting. Ranneberger acknowledged that the AU missions has become increasingly more effective. He urged AU to speak out more frequently and more forcefully when atrocities and ceasefire violations occur as a means of deterring further such incidents. It should more aggressively execute its expanded mandate, which includes a component for protection of civilians in imminent danger. He explained the U.S. view that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) must be used to press forward rapidly on a resolution to Darfur. Garang should use his influence with the rebels, and the U.S. has told him this. Pressure must be maintained on both sides; that is why the U.S. is pushing in New York for targeted sanctions on perpetrators of violence and atrocities in Darfur.

4. (C) Konare congratulated the U.S. on its achievement in Naivasha, strongly concurring that it was central to resolving Darfur. The nature of the government in Khartoum must change, he said, and the AU has already pressed Garang to bring his influence with the rebels to bear. The AU is now seeing very troubling developments in Darfur. Hardliners in Khartoum may be behind unraveling security conditions in order to impede implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and weaken Garang, or even to create conditions for the overthrow of Bashir. Konare said AU President Obasanjo would deliver a stern message to the Sudanese delegation at the Summit. (During his public speech opening the summit, Obasanjo specifically condemned the recent aerial bombardment in Darfur and blamed the GOS for this. We were later told by an AU official who was in the room that the heads of state in their private meeting pressed the GOS hard on the need to stop the violence. Our source said it was the toughest discussion he had ever witnessed at such private sessions.)

15. (C) Konare thanked the U.S. for support of the AU's Darfur mission. "Should the AU mission fail in Darfur," he said, "it would be a disaster." If the mission were handed "to the UN today, then it would be a failure for us, and the (African) people will see this clearly." Yes, there have been capacity problems, he admitted, but the AU has undertaken a ground-breaking mission in Darfur. The U.S. must help ensure it is a success. The UN can also help, and the AU will closely collaborate "at all levels" with the UN force to be deployed to southern Sudan. "But the AU should remain at the forefront," he stressed, adding that UN Special Representative Pronk was bringing a draft MOU to the Summit outlining the possible scope of AU-UN cooperation. Ranneberger asked that the AU share this document with us as soon as possible. Konare agreed to do so.

16. (C) Turning to the AU mandate, Konare strongly agreed AU troops should be prepared to protect civilians. "Our troops are troops of protection," he said, adding he was trying to reinforce this view with AU Coordinator Kingibe. It would be much easier to protect the rebels if they would agree to cantonment, Konare said, and their continuing attacks are playing into the hands of the GOS. Konare said that the AU would position forces with the rebels if they would agree to cantonment. Ranneberger noted that Kingibe and Ambassador Djinnit (the head of the AU's Peace and Security Council) have indicated the AU wants to "pre-cook" tentative agreement between the parties before actually inviting them to Abuja. Too often the AU has convened talks then waited days for the parties, particularly the rebels, to trickle into Abuja. Ranneberger emphasized the need to move head urgently to achieve a political settlement, within the Naivasha framework. Konare agreed and stressed his desire to coordinate closely with the U.S. to maintain pressure on both sides.

Darfur Accountability

17. (C) Ranneberger then raised accountability for atrocities in Darfur, pressing Konare to support an alternative to the International Criminal Court. He noted that as early as next week the UN's International Commission of Inquiry's report will be released publicly, with the report possibly calling for referral to the ICC. The U.S. opposes such a move, and believes a separate tribunal should be established with UNSC support. He urged the AU to work with the UNSC to set up a court for the Darfur atrocities. He pointed out that the court could sit in Arusha drawing on the infrastructure already in place for the Rwanda tribunal. He indicated the U.S. is confident that there will be sufficient funding for such a tribunal. Such a court would highlight African efforts to ensure accountability and would reinforce AU cooperation with the UN. Konare asked for time to consider the idea. Ranneberger urged him to provide a quick response in view of the fact that the UNSC will be asked to take action once the Commission of Inquiry report is presented.

19. (C) Turning to the issue of AU succession, Ranneberger said the U.S. understands the Sudanese are no longer in the running. He cited speculation that Libyan leader Qadhafi might be named to head the AU, and made clear that this possibility gravely concerned the U.S. Konare said that the July summit would probably take place in Sirte, to give Qadhafi something, but he would not be made head of the AU. Konare said he expected the current summit to extend Obasanjo for six months (until January 2006). It was not yet clear who would succeed Obasanjo, but it would not be Qadhafi. (Note: Obasanjo had stopped in Tripoli the day before the summit en route back to Nigeria from Davos, and presumably talked this through with Qadhafi. Qadhafi was expected to attend the summit, but did not. We subsequently confirmed that this course of action has been adopted by the AU summit, with one variation. The January 2006 summit may take place in Khartoum, with the possibility that the Sudanese could take the presidency of the AU, but heads of state have reportedly made clear this will only happen if the peace process is on track and violence has ended in Darfur. End Note.) The heads of state have agreed that, following Khartoum, all future summits will take place in Addis Ababa as a way of avoiding the automatic, rotating linkage of giving the country where the summit is held the presidency of the AU.

AU Stretched Too Thin

10. (C) Ambassador Ranneberger asked if the AU had plans for a presence in Somalia. Given AU involvement in Darfur and other areas he expressed U.S. concern that the AU was extending itself beyond its capacity. Konare agreed that this is a serious concern, but said the AU needs to support the Somali transitional government with both military and political presence in Somalia. Konare said the AU will draw on only one or two countries, mainly Uganda, for up to 2000 troops to serve principally to protect the institutions of the transitional government once it moves to Mogadishu. The AU mission would not engage in police enforcement or identify

with one clan over another. The AU mission would also be designed to support political dialogue in Somalia, including talks with Somaliland. Ranneberger reviewed the continuing U.S. skepticism about the transitional government, but made clear that the U.S. continues to support the IGAD-led process. He urged the AU to proceed with caution, emphasizing that the transitional government must do much more to establish its legitimacy. The AU would have to be careful to avoid having the transitional government use the AU to try to impose legitimacy.

11, (C) (Note: As discussed separately with Djinnit, the AU is consulting with South Africa regarding the deployment of a small force to eastern Congo for a limited period of time. This would be "SADC force," although nominally under the auspices of the AU. End Note.)

U.S.-AU Relationship

12. (C) Ranneberger told Konare that the U.S. wants to make support for the AU a major priority of U.S. policy on Africa.

In that context, the U.S. welcomes the AU intention to open an office in Washington. Konare said the AU wants to have a strong office and hopes to have one in place by March. Ranneberger expressed the hope that Konare could come to Washington for the opening and for meetings with senior U.S. officials. Ranneberger said that the U.S. is working to identify increased funding for capacity building and institutional strengthening. Konare confirmed that the AU will hold a donors meeting in Addis some time in February to present AU's programs and funding needs, with subsequent follow-up meetings with individual donors. Konare warmly welcomed U.S. interest in strengthening its relationship with the AU. Konare emphasized the need for donor support to enhance AU managerial capacity, to establish effective accountability mechanisms, and to train additional African forces for peacekeeping operations, among other needs.

On the AU Summit Agenda

13. (U) Ranneberger emphasized the need to avoid surprises, and asked Konare what areas would be covered in the final AU communique. Konare said he expected no reference to Iraq and stock AU language on the Middle East. Beyond this, the AU summit leaders would discuss UN reform, ask members for greater financial support, adopt a non-aggression and common defense pact, and formally create an Africa intelligence coordination unit at AU headquarters. The Nigerians will lead AU intelligence coordination.

UN Reform

14. (C) Konare said that Harare Declaration from the late 90s remains the basis for the AU position favoring two permanent seats for Africa on the UNSC. He said that South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt are pushing the AU to support UN reform along the lines of "Model A." The AU will name a commission to study the issue, which will meet in Swaziland in mid-February. Its deliberations will form the basis for development of a definitive AU position in time to influence the UNSYG's expected report on UN reform in March.

CAMPBELL